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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Turks Skeptical of US Efforts Against the PKK  
Cumhuriyet and Vatan report that Inal Batu, a leading lawmaker from the opposition CHP, said the US suggestion to appoint a special coordinator was a "stalling tactic," just another way to put off concrete action against the organization. Analysts and politicians are skeptical of the idea of a "special coordinator," stressing that, inspired by "the IRA model," the goal was to transform the PKK from a terrorist organization into a political force, pressing Turkey to negotiate with the PKK. Meanwhile, the papers report that under growing political and military pressure, the outlawed PKK has shifted operations to Turkey's Black Sea region, in a move also aimed at boosting the morale of its members. Papers also report that US troops are training in Kuwait for anti-PKK military operations on Mount Kandil. Iran, too, reportedly stepped up operations against the PKK.

Writing in the nationalist Ortadogu, Kamuran Ozbir warns of Turkish government inattention to the problem, pointing out that the appointment of a "special coordinator" is a danger signal in the battle against the PPK: "Turkey has been receiving promises from the US regarding the PKK since the beginning of the Iraqi war in 2003. So far, there have been no concrete results, a situation which the AKP government has chosen to ignore. Every country has a unit responsible for counter-terrorism. If one side assigns a special envoy, that means some new steps, such as a general amnesty, will be taken bilaterally. Fighting against terrorism should be an immediate priority, not a fight spread out over a long time. With the assignment of a special coordinator, the Bush Administration is trying to distract Turkey's attention once again. And, unfortunately, our administration is continuing to ignore these developments."

Hikmet Bila, commenting in the leftist Cumhuriyet, agrees that the need for a "special coordinator" indicates trouble: "The US is going to assign a special coordinator to deal with the PKK, supposedly to

coordinate the fight against the PKK. This shows that there are no channels left between two NATO allies and friends in the fight against terrorism. Obviously, the governments, militaries and the embassies were not capable of resolving this issue and they decided to assign a coordinator. The opposition in Turkey has already warned the government that this not a good solution and if Turkey agrees to it, Turkey will lose out. Actually, this is an historic warning, because Turkish history is full of problems caused by special coordinator assignments. History will be repeating itself on the day the US assigns a special coordinator for the PKK in Northern Iraq."

#### Saudi King Abdullah Visits Turkey

All papers report Saudi King Abdullah came yesterday to Turkey accompanied by a 300-member delegation of officials and businessmen. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer hosted a dinner for King Abdullah in Ankara at which the ongoing violence in Lebanon was discussed. Abdullah said that the "wise" Turkish position vis-à-vis the crisis in Lebanon was in line with the position of the Saudi Kingdom. He also said the Middle East should be cleared of nuclear weapons. After dinner, the sides signed six agreements to deepen bilateral ties, agreeing to double bilateral trade, currently amounting to USD 2.8 billion. Reports speculate that Turkey and Saudi Arabia are kicking off a period of economic strategic partnership. Turkey offered incentives to encourage Saudi investments in the country. Papers claim King Abdullah was interested in making USD 8 billion in investments in Istanbul and in constructing a mall containing health, sports and shopping facilities. Abdullah is the first Saudi king to pay an official visit to Turkey since the foundation of the Kingdom in 1932.

#### US Transfers Arms from Incirlik Airbase

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Sabah, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, and Yeni Safak claim 15 truckload of explosives belonging to the US Army were taken to Tasucu port near the Mediterranean coastal city of Mersin. Papers speculate that the arms were en route to Israel through Incirlik Airbase in south Turkey. Yeni Safak alleges that the shipment included GBU-28 bunker buster bombs being sent to Israel by the US. US sources, however, have said that the shipments contained munitions from Incirlik Airbase being returned to the US.

#### New Election System to Keep Kurds out of Parliament

Vatan reports the ruling AK Party is mulling changes in the election system to prevent more pro-Kurdish lawmakers from entering the parliament. The AKP is working on a formula to implement a threshold for independent candidates. If the opposition CHP supports the draft regulation, independent candidates will have to overcome a 2 or 3 percent threshold to win seats in the parliament. Vatan says Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP was expecting to win 40 seats in parliament through candidates running as independents in the next general elections, but that the new formula would allow the Kurds to get only 5 or 6 seats. CHP is negative about the proposal, says the paper.

#### US Review of GSP to Hit Turkish Exporters

Hurriyet, Sabah and Dunya report Turkish exports to the United States are at risk because the Bush administration is reviewing trade benefits such as duty-free imports for 13 developing countries, including Turkey. US Trade Representative Susan Schwab said a meeting at the US Congress on August 7 noted that the least developed countries did not benefit from General System of Preferences (GSP) and that a review of the existing implementation would be announced on September 5. State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said Turkey had USD 1 billion of exports via GSP, and that if taken off the list, Turkish exporters would be adversely affected.

#### TV Highlights

NTV (7 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- Turkish Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc has called for the release of the speaker of the Palestinian parliament, Aziz Dweik, and

Palestinian lawmakers under custody in Israel.

- Prime Minister Erdogan will meet today with Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, who is visiting Turkey as the guest of Erdogan's top foreign policy advisor, Professor Ahmet Davutoglu.
- Eight PKK militants turned themselves in to the security forces in the southeastern border province of Sirnak yesterday.
- The Turkish Undersecretariat for Maritime Affairs has announced that Turkish beaches are not threatened by an oil slick caused by Israel's bombing of a Lebanese power plant.

#### International News

- Fifty Lebanese civilians have been killed in the latest Israeli bombings, including at least 30 in a strike on southern Beirut.
- King Abdullah of Jordan said the US, Britain and Europe have failed to adopt a comprehensive strategy to resolve the problems of the Middle East and have caused great concern with regard to the future of the region.
- German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the UN Security Council could pass this week a resolution to stop fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

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